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Northern Plains Indian Art Market turns 25

The Northern Plains Indian Art Market, formerly known as Northern Plains Tribal Arts Show and Market, is celebrating 25 years of bringing art of the Northern Plains nations to the public in Sioux Falls, SD.

Hosted by the Rosebud Sioux Tribal College Sinte Gleska, the event takes place Sept. 27-30 and offers a wide variety of activities. The event opens Sept. 27 with an artist's reception for "Commemorating the 25th Annual Northern Plains Art Market," which is on display through Nov. 30 at Augustana College in Sioux Falls. Festivities continue with the results of the juried art show, a reception for the artists, a traditional powwow and buffalo feed, and the art market itself, held Sept. 29-30 at the Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall.

The largest market of its kind in the Northern Plains features the work of Native artists from over 33 tribes. During its history, the market has showcased the work of noted Native artists such as Jackie Parsons, Jackie Bread and the late King Kuka.

Applications for inclusion in the art market are being accepted until Sept. 21; interested artists may download the application and learn more about the event at sites.google.com/site/npiamorg/home.

For details, call 605-856-8193.

NATIVE NEWS

Native American playwright festival makes connection

By Bernie L. Azure
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Salish and Kootenai Tribes

They say a little bit of sugar makes the medicine go down. That adage could also apply to five-day long "Old Stories – New Voices" the Native American Playwright Festival held in the Hangin' Art Gallery in Arlee July 23-27.

"This is a great way to tell stories, to push forward the historical narrative of Indian people," said educator Julie Cajune. This is the second year Cajune has been involved in bringing the American Indian theater effort to local audiences. "People won't always be inclined to read the history books but they may be inclined to view a play. It is a different approach to getting our message out there."

Cajune said the end product of the effort is to guide and nurture a long-lasting American Indian theater festival on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

A play written by Salish author Jennifer Greene based on the 1855 Treaty of Hellgate was performed before local folks Friday as well as a group of Middle East and North Africa Muslim students attending the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) at Montana State University.

"This is some very important history of our people," Cajune said. It is a history that the vast majority of Montanans, Americans and the world know little if anything about it. "We need to hold the Hellgate Treaty in our hearts and we need to hold our country accountable for its tenets. There is no higher law than treaty law in the American Constitution. But the Indian treaties were just about getting the land and its resources from the Indians. That's still going on today."

Kevin Brustuen of the MSU Office of International Programs said there were 19 Muslim students from 15 countries involved in the month-long summer educational endeavor. The focus of the MEPI is to foster better relationships with future leaders of the Middle East countries through leader-

ship, human rights, democracy and cultural awareness. All the students have never been to America before.

"We try to give them a real picture of America," Brustuen said, adding that many of the Muslim students didn't realize that American Indians still existed as a sovereign entity within the borders of America. "They

to financially support an ongoing effort to promote American Indian theater that promotes plays written by American Indian authors.

"Theater moves people. It speaks to them in a different way," Cajune said. "We want to connect with people who may not seek it out because American Indian theater is not part of mainstream theater. It is one way to chip away at the incorrect stories about our people and promote their experiences correctly by promoting our self image in this world that is different from others."

Greene said she had a bit of stage fright with the Hellgate Treaty play. She has authored several poems, stories and screen plays but not a play per se. She was worried about creating the dialogue but pumped up about the possibilities of pulling it off.

"This was the first time I did anything like this and it has been one of the most invigorating weeks I have ever had," Greene said. "The most difficult part was my own self-doubt. Writing for me is never without self-doubt. This was a huge project to take on but I think it turned out great and

I think it will happen again. I know we'll do more of this. I am thankful for all those who showed up. It was an honor to do this. I am proud it turned out so well. I didn't know what to expect going into this. But now I am excited to do more."

Cajune said the weeklong effort was a positive experience for the authors, performers and the public attendees.

"I was worried about how people would respond to this, if they would understand this," Cajune said. "I think they did because the human condition is a shared one that knows no borders."

The "Old Stories – New Voices" event was sponsored by Npustin and the Arlee Community Development Corporation. The festival brought together American Indian playwrights Myrton Running Wolf, Vic Charlo, Jennifer Greene and Julie Cajune as well as Zan Agzigian.

A different American Indian-authored play was performed each night.



Linda Grinde introduces the cast of the reading of the Jennifer Greene play based on the 1855 Treaty of Hellgate.

(B.L. Azure photo)

only knew what they saw on television, the old Western movies. The sovereignty of Indians in America is completely new to them. We want to expose them to the vibrant American Indian cultures that have a lot of similarities with their cultures."

He said the playwright festival "opened the students eyes and they made connections with similar issues that American Indians and Middle East Muslims are facing."

Brustuen said that one of the Middle East students is going to write a play based on her experience garnered on the tour of Montana Indian reservations this summer.

"It's always a great idea to share our historic and modern experience in America with people from other countries," Cajune said. "We want to give them a realistic view of the image of American Indians. We have to take advantage of opportunities like this because they can make differences in perceptions."

Cajune said the folks involved in "Old Stories – New Voices" want to create a structure

Bently Spang in group show at Berkshire Museum

Northern Cheyenne multi-disciplinary artist Bently Spang's work is currently part of a group exhibition titled "Rethink! American Indian Art," on display at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, MA, through Jan. 6.

Other Native artists in the exhibition include Marcus Amerman, Jeremy Frey, Teri Greeves, Diego Romero and Preston Singletary. The exhibition features contemporary works of art in a range of media and techniques, from video installations, contemporary basketry and beadwork, to ceramics, sculpture and glass, positioned alongside historic Native and non-Native art objects from the museum's permanent collections.

"Rethink!" is co-curated by art historian Margaret Archuleta and Berkshire Museum's director of interpretation Maria Mingalone and collections manager/registrar Leanne Hayden.

"Rethink!" challenges many of the preconceptions and stereotypes of American Indian art," says Mingalone. "Showcasing historic material with the work of contemporary artists demonstrates that Indians have not disappeared, and that Indian artists continue to express themselves in a contemporary world."

The six artists and co-curator Archuleta took part in a three-day symposium last winter where they were introduced to the museum's collection and provided the opportunity to dialogue about work in the collections, bringing a personal perspective to the



Video still from "Waiting to Hunt on the White Man's Land," by Bently Spang.

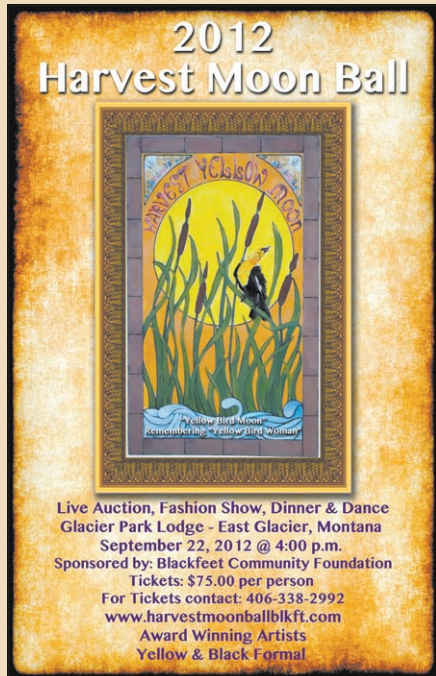
volatile issues surrounding museum collections and the Native community.

This dialogue and the artist and museum interactions were videotaped and used in the development of the exhibition.

Art historian Margaret Archuleta believes the exhibit "provides the museum visitor an opportunity to reevaluate their notions and understanding of Indian people and the artwork they create."

Spang's work includes his oft-exhibited, seminal work "Modern Warrior Series: War Shirt #1," that has appeared in such exhibitions as 2004's "Only Skin Deep" at the International Center of Photography in New York City and this year's "Shapeshifting: Transformations in Native American Art" at the Peabody-Essex Museum.

He also debuts a new video installation titled "Waiting to Hunt on the White Man's Land," a 14-foot wide, seven-minute, single-channel video piece that chronicles his and his family's annual act of reclaiming land taken from them in the past by the U.S. government.



The Blackfeet Community Foundation's annual Harvest Moon Ball begins at 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 22, at the historic Glacier Park Lodge in East Glacier. The benefit includes a hosted reception followed by an elegant dinner, live and silent art auctions, a fashion show and a dance. Tickets are \$75 per person. Poster art for the event honors Yellow Bird Woman, or Eloise Cobell of the Blackfeet Nation, who successfully led the landmark 16-year fight against the federal government for the misuse of Native trust accounts, and passed away last October. The poster was created by Athena Moxsona. For more information, call 406-338-2992 or visit harvestmoonballblkt.com.